



BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2019-0055]

Notice of Availability of an Evaluation of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Newcastle Disease Status of Romania

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that we are proposing to recognize Romania as being free of highly pathogenic avian influenza and Newcastle disease. This proposed recognition is based on a risk evaluation we have prepared in connection with this action, which we are making available for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2019-0055>.
- Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery: Send your comment to Docket No. APHIS-2019-0055, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238.

Supporting documents and any comments we receive on this docket may be viewed at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=APHIS-2019-0055> or in our reading room, which is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 799-7039 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Javier Vargas, Senior Staff Officer, Regionalization Evaluation Services, Veterinary Services, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 38, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 851-3316; javier.vargas@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The regulations in 9 CFR part 94 (referred to below as the regulations) govern the importation of certain animals and animal products into the United States in order to prevent the introduction of various animal diseases, including highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and Newcastle disease. Within part 94, § 94.6 contains requirements governing the importation of carcasses, meat, parts or products of carcasses, and eggs (other than hatching eggs) of poultry, game birds, or other birds from regions where HPAI and Newcastle disease is considered to exist.

In accordance with § 94.6(a)(1)(i) the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) maintains a list of regions in which Newcastle disease is not considered to exist. Paragraph (a)(1)(ii) states that APHIS will add a region to this list after it conducts an evaluation of the region and finds that Newcastle disease is not likely to be present in its commercial bird or poultry populations.

In accordance with § 94.6(a)(2)(i), APHIS maintains a list of regions in which HPAI is considered to exist. Paragraph (a)(2)(ii) states that APHIS will remove a region from this list only after it conducts an evaluation of the region and finds that HPAI is not likely to be present in its commercial bird or poultry populations.

The regulations in 9 CFR part 92, § 92.2, contain requirements for requesting the recognition of the animal health status of a region (as well as for the approval of the export of a particular type of animal or animal product to the United States from a foreign region). If, after review and evaluation of the information submitted in support of the request, APHIS believes the request can be safely granted, APHIS will make its evaluation available for public comment through a document published in the *Federal Register*. Following the close of the comment period, APHIS will review all comments received and will make a final determination regarding the request that will be detailed in another document published in the *Federal Register*.

The Government of Romania has requested that APHIS evaluate the HPAI and Newcastle disease status of the country. In response to Romania's request, we have prepared an evaluation, titled "APHIS Evaluation of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Newcastle Disease Status of Romania" (May 2019). Based on this evaluation, we have determined that Romania's domestic poultry populations are currently free of both HPAI and Newcastle disease as defined in 9 CFR 94.0. APHIS acknowledges the continuing risk posed by wild birds in Romania and the European Union (EU); however, Romania's competent veterinary authority takes effective prevention and control measures minimizing the risk of introduction to commercial poultry, and these are sufficient to minimize the likelihood of introducing HPAI and Newcastle disease into the United States via imports of species or products susceptible to these diseases. Our determination supports adding Romania to the Web-based list of regions in which

Newcastle disease is not considered to exist and removing Romania from the Web-based list of regions in which HPAI is considered to exist.

APHIS also concludes that Romania meets the requirements to form part of the EU Poultry Trade Region (EUPTR), an APHIS-recognized region of the EU that meets APHIS requirements for being considered free of HPAI and Newcastle disease, and for which the importation of live birds and poultry and poultry meat and products is harmonized.

Therefore, in accordance with § 92.2(e), we are announcing the availability of our risk evaluation of the HPAI and Newcastle disease status of Romania for public review and comment.

In April 2012, APHIS prepared an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing the potential effects on the human environment from listing the 25 Member States that constituted the EU in 2006 as a region free of HPAI and Newcastle disease (collectively referred to as EUPTR). The EA has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provision of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

The evaluation and EA may be viewed on the Regulations.gov website or in our reading room. (Instructions for accessing Regulations.gov and information on the location and hours of the reading room are provided under the heading ADDRESSES at the beginning of this notice.) The documents are also available by contacting the person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

Information submitted in support of Romania's request is available by contacting the person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

After reviewing any comments we receive, we will announce our decision regarding the disease status of Romania with respect to HPAI and Newcastle disease in a subsequent notice.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1633, 7701-7772, 7781-7786, and 8301-8317; 21 U.S.C. 136 and 136a; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.4.

Done in Washington, DC, this 10th day of September 2019 .

Kevin Shea,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2019-19893 Filed: 9/13/2019 8:45 am; Publication Date: 9/16/2019]